January 26,1991

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ANARCHIST COMMUNITY

Dear Brothers & Sisters:

It is great to be out here in the streets with you protesting against the State's latest imperialist adventure. Once again, Amerikkkan society is faced with proof that its government is nothing but a den of thieves and murderers. It is in times like these that it is most exciting to be an anarchist. Peoples' complacency is being shaken as more and more of us clearly see that it is not in our interest to obey the government and its laws.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain some of my differences with **@utonomous @anarchist @ction** and why I have chosen not to march with the **"Black Block"**. I do not want my absence from this contingent to be misconstrued as a withdrawal from the anarchist community. In a time of crisis such as this, unity is important, but unity presupposes trust. Unfortunately, I have reason not to trust one particular member of **AAA**.

Much has been written about the split which led to the closing of **S@botage** books last year. Much of this has consisted of gross distortions of the truth. Since it is impossible for anyone who wasn't there to really know what happened, these diatribes in the anarchist press make it look like New York anarchists do nothing but quarrel with one another. In fact, it was anarchists from the Lower East Side who organized the first demos against the Persian Gulf War, way back in August before either of the two "official" anti-war groups existed. We also played a key role in organizing major demonstrations on the eve of war and on the night that war broke out. Our newspaper, the Shadow, comes out regularly. We have been doing our best to fight against the "New World Order" as well as against the efforts of the gentrifiers to turn the Lower East Side into a yuppie ghetto. However, the absence of S@botage, our organizing space, has greatly hampered our efforts.

I don't like to talk about **S@botage** because I don't like to dwell on failures. It suffices to say that **S@abotage** was taken away from us by a sectarian clique which purged everyone from the collective who disagreed with them and then locked us out. When people in the neighborhood spontaneously rose up and retook the store, dave lawrence and his clique handed over the lease to the landlord, who then called the police to occupy the store and keep us out. dave and his friends excused this act of treachery, which denied all New York anarchists an invaluable organizing tool, by saying that the other members of the collective were "not real anarchists". There is nothing more un-anarchistic than this sort of political litmus test, except perhaps making deals with landlords to evict other anarchists. In spite of his track record of betrayal, dave lawrence is a member of **AAA**; in fact he may well be carrying the banner at the front of this contingent.

dave also used the columns of *Love & Rage* to publish lies about me which could compromise my court case stemming from the Mayday 1990 police riot in Tompkins Square Park. The editor of *L&R* has so far refused to print my response to this vicious slander.

I would also like to take this opportunity to raise some questions about the strategy of the **Black Block**. First of all, we want to attract people who hate authority. Anti-authoritarian people usually have an aversion to uniforms. The global crisis that we are now in the middle of is forcing people to seek new answers. With communism in discredit and capitalism crumbling, people will see the wisdom of anarchist ideas. How shall we present ourselves: as an open community of diverse individuals united to defend their freedom, or as a block of conformity? Now is the time to be accessible to people instead of marching in formation and talking among ourselves. Diversity is Necessity!

When we stop talking among ourselves, sometimes we find out that people marching in formation in black uniforms are not universally recognized as defenders of freedom. As a person of Italian descent, I find black shirts to be a mixed symbol. At best the **"Black Block"** will be perceived as a hermetically sealed sect no better than the Sparts. The apparent militarism will turn off many people who might otherwise have stopped to talk. You do not empower people by putting them off.

Striking a militant stance is not enough to prepare us for the tasks ahead in these days of war in the Middle East and at home. Let's use this time to inspire more and more people to join us in our fight to defeat the police state and save our planet! Onward to a better world! **All Power to the Imagination!!**

Yours in Struggle,

Lori Rizzo

If you would like to respond to this letter, you may contact me via Tompkins Square/Mayday 29 Defense Committee, 228 East 10th Street, Box 24, New York, N.Y. 10003.